

**Expository Essay Assignment *The Crucible***  
**Choose one topic from the four topic choices**

The following Miller-penned excerpt came from his preface to *Death of a Salesman*, and was published in the *New York Times* in 1949:

*"As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing-his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his "rightful" position in society.*

*Sometimes he is one who has been displaced from it, sometimes one who seeks to attain it for the first time, but the fateful wound from which the inevitable events spiral is the wound of indignity, and its dominant force is indignation. Tragedy, then, is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly."*

1. After reading Miller's quote you will consider a central question concerning *The Crucible*; is John Proctor a tragic figure? Develop your argument; Utilize various definitions of tragedy (particularly Aristotle's classic definition vs. Miller's contemporary one) and use at least 1 secondary source with the primary source.

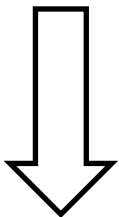
2. Through research concerning historical accounts of the Salem witch trials and McCarthyism of the 1950's, our culminating discussions and assignments will seek to draw parallels or distinctions with contemporary American society. In your essay, you will compose an extensive discussion and analysis of the allegorical interpretation of Miller's purpose using textual evidence from the play and the previously read research as posted on the wiki to substantiate your claim. Areas for discussion: characters, court, spectral evidence, reasons for accusations, Miller, paradox, etc. Note: this is not a history report, but you are using history to discuss allegory. Use 2 secondary sources.

3. While reading the play, consider the following definition: *Crucible* (n) –
  1. a vessel; used for melting a substance that requires a high degree of heat
  2. a severe test
  3. a place or situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change or development

Using the definition(s) of a crucible as the basis for your thesis explain how the play is a crucible for *at least two* of the characters. You may not use John Proctor as one of your examples. You must use specific details from the play for support. Use at least 1 secondary source.

4. Discuss the established structure of Salem and its Puritan society – *its binary oppositions/social divisions into rich and poor, powerful and powerless, town insiders and outsiders, male and female, educated and illiterate, old and young, religious conservatives and religious liberals, etc.* Discuss how the events of the play constitute an attempt of some segments of society to overturn the traditional ways of society, while other segments fight to maintain /strengthen the old/traditional social order. Discuss Miller's larger message as it relates to these struggles, considering the witch hunts as an allegory for the McCarthy trials, as well as social struggles in other times and places (such as modern day America). In other words, how is the play a battle among the groups or divisions mentioned above, and how might their motives and struggles mirror the motives and struggles of various societal segments in other societies besides that of Salem in the 1600s? Use specific characters to represent the social groups/divisions that you will discuss. Discuss how their moral stages (Kohlberg) reflect their motives and the title. Use 2 secondary sources.

Read below for timeline & requirements:



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**Schedule**

- Due Monday:
  - Thesis and outline
- Suggested timeline:
  - Friday: read prompts, choose topic, read research
  - Mon/Tuesday: Write introduction and body paragraph 1
  - Wednesday: computer lab write rough draft essay
  - Thursday:
  - Friday: bring printed copy for peer edit
  - Monday: Final copy due
- Structure
  - Introduction
  - Central thesis
  - 3-4 body paragraphs
  - Insightful conclusion
  - (Minimum 5 paragraphs)
- Research (secondary sources):
  - all research is posted on the wiki, but you can use additional research sources from academic, scholarly authors. Remember to check for credibility as a reliable source. I would suggest you seek approval for your source before using it in the paper.
- Use Formal writing tone, style, diction
- Citations:
  - Use at least 6 citations in the paper  
(includes *The Crucible* and 1-2 secondary sources)
- Sources:
  - List minimum of 2-3 citations on the Works Cited page (includes *The Crucible*)
- Turnitin.com
  - submit to turnitin.com by deadline September 24<sup>th</sup> by 3:30 . You will lose 10 points if your paper is not submitted on time (no excuses accepted).
- Print hard copy before class with works cited. Due upon class arrival. -10 for/day late.
- 100 points for final draft
- 10 points for rough draft
- -10 for each day late for any reason